SPIRITUAL PURIFICATION RETREAT

MAINTAINING A HEART IN A STATUS OF IHSAN

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Maintaining a Heart in a Status of Ihsān

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We spoke about the honor of ‘Ubūdīyyah, and then after that we spoke about how to attain ‘Ubūdīyyah through knowledge about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. And now the ultimate level and state of ‘Ubūdīyyah that we should strive for is to maintain a heart that consistently feels the presence of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, as if one sees Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. A heart where the Unseen feels as if they are physically seeing it. It’s as if they are seeing Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, as if they are seeing the ‘Arsh of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, as if they are watching the people of Jannah visiting each other in Jannah, as if they are watching the people in Jahhanam crying out in suffering. Those who know about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى strive for this status, and they compete to achieve it,

وَفِي ذَٰلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ ٱلْمُتَنَـٰفِسُونَ

So for this let the competitors compete.

One of the most significant methods to elevate your level to Ihsān is to reflect on the impact of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى’s creations on this earth, which was the last topic that we spoke about. Yes, we cannot physically see Allāh سبحانه وتعالى in this Dunyā with our eyes, that’s because this life is a test. If everyone could see Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, then everyone would believe, and that would undermine the purpose of the test, and also due to our weakness as human beings in this Dunyā, we wouldn’t be able to endure it. Just like Allāh سبحانه وتعالى told Mūsā عليه السلام

قَالَ لَن تَرَىٰنِى

Allāh said, “You cannot see Me…”

He couldn’t withstand to see Allāh سبحانه وتعالى in this life.

قَالَ لَن تَرَىٰنِى وَلَٰكِنِ ٱنظُرْ إِلَى ٱلْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ ٱسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُۥ فَسَوْفَ تَرَىٰنِى

Allāh said: "You cannot see Me, but look upon the mountain; if it stands still in its place then you shall see Me."

فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُۥ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُۥ دَكًّا

So when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He made it collapse to dust…

Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله تعالى said we don't see Allāh سبحانه وتعالى in this Dunyā because our eyes are too weak, not because it’s impossible to see Him. It’s like when someone stares directly at the sun, they can’t see it clearly because their eyes can’t handle its brightness, not because the sun itself is unseeable. In the Ākhirah, Allāh سبحانه وتعالى will strengthen the abilities so that one can see Him Inshā’Allāh. May Allāh سبحانه وتعالى grant us all that honor. How many even actually long or think about this in their private ‘Ibādāt or make Du'ā for it?

Now, even though we established that we can’t see Allāh سبحانه وتعالى physically in this Dunyā, believers can sense His presence in their hearts as if they are seeing Him. In the long Hadīth, when Jibrīl عليه السلام asked the Messenger ﷺ several questions, the Messenger ﷺ defined Ihsān and he said,

أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ

The meaning of the Hadīth is that Ihsān is to worship Allāh سبحانه وتعالى as if you see Him, and if you can't achieve this state of devotion, then a step below that Allāh سبحانه وتعالى sees him. One who worships Allāh سبحانه وتعالى as if he's seeing Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, that's referred to as Maqām Al-Mushāhid. The second state or level in the Hadīth, the one who worships Allāh سبحانه وتعالى knowing that Allāh سبحانه وتعالى sees him, that's called Maqām Al-Ikhlās wal-Murāqabah. If you pay attention, there's a delicate difference in the second, which is that Maqām Al-Ikhlās is a lesser rank that Maqām Al-Mushāhadah. We're trying to attain Maqām Al-Mushāhadah throughout our life. The Hadīth serves as a foundation, goal, and a treasure for those who want to please Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and worship Him. It's the practice of the virtuous. We must reach that high level of Yaqīn and Īmān in Allāh سبحانه وتعالى to feel as if you are seeing Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Imagine someone living his life worshiping Allāh سبحانه وتعالى as if he's seeing Him. That type of lifestyle would foster the highest level of respect, fear, humility, reverence, and sincerity to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. The worship of someone at this status would be in the best possible way. If you truly feel as if you are seeing Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, then you'll be profoundly aware of all your actions, of all your speech, and even your fleeting thoughts. You'll think twice before doing something that might displease Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, because you want to show respect to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. This level of 'Ubūdīyyah goes beyond just the physical 'Ibādāt and Tarawīh and Qiyām and fasting, it encompasses every part of our lives since our whole existence in this Dunyā was meant for 'Ubūdīyyah.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ ٱلْجِنَّ وَٱلْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.

When it comes to speech, you speak as if you're seeing Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. What's the result? You would select the words that you want Allāh سبحانه وتعالى to hear from you. You would choose the words that you would be proud to stand before Allāh سبحانه وتعالى with. When you're doing something and your heart is at a status where it's as if you're seeing Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, that will inspire you to act in a way you would feel proud to show Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. An individual who reaches this state will even be mindful of their own thoughts. You'll find that your thoughts are now focused on Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, they pertain to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Any negative thought might make you feel embarrassed because you're at this high status now. It's a cure for show-off and other heart illnesses. Someone who worships Allāh سبحانه وتعالى as if he sees Him might perform his Salāh, charity, engage in Jihād, and other public actions and he can be genuine, pure, and sincere because all they can see in their actions is Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. They focus solely on Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, they see no one else, even if the whole world is present around them. This status of Ihsān, to worship Allāh سبحانه وتعالى as if you see Him, relates everything back to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. When someone gives you, a person at this status will see it as if Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is the one who's giving — and he actually is. Yūsuf عليه السلام was referred to as being among the Muhsinīn, and he was referred to as being among the Muhsinīn in many verses in the Qur'ān in practically all stages in his life. When he was a youth,

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُۥ وَٱسْتَوَىٰٓ ءَاتَيْنَٰهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا ۚ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِى ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ

And when he attained his full strength and was [mentally] mature, We bestowed upon him judgement and knowledge. And thus do We reward the Muhsinīn.

When he was in prison,

نَبِّئْنَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِۦٓ ۖ إِنَّا نَرَىٰكَ مِنَ ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ

Inform us of its interpretation; indeed, we see you to be of the Muhsinīn.

When he was reuniting with his family, he said,

قَالَ أَنَا۠ يُوسُفُ وَهَٰذَآ أَخِى ۖ قَدْ مَنَّ ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْنَآ ۖ إِنَّهُۥ مَن يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ

I am Yūsuf, and this is my brother. Allāh has certainly favored us. Indeed, he who fears Allāh and is patient, then indeed, Allāh does not allow to be lost the reward of the Muhsinīn.

And also,

قَالُوا۟ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْعَزِيزُ إِنَّ لَهُۥٓ أَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا فَخُذْ أَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهُۥٓ ۖ إِنَّا نَرَىٰكَ مِنَ ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ

They said, "O ʿAzīz, indeed he has a father [who is] an old man, so take one of us in place of him. Indeed, we see you as being from the Muhsinīn."

When he was established on this earth after he was released from prison,

وَكَذَٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ يَتَبَوَّأُ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَآءُ ۚ نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَن نَّشَآءُ ۖ وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ

And thus We established Yūsuf in the land to settle therein wherever he willed. We touch with Our mercy whom We will, and We do not allow to be lost the reward of the Muhsinīn.

He's among the Muhsinīn, and a person of that status sees everything good as coming only from Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. When he was released, there were many means he could have attributed his release to — he served his time, the dream, the king realizes the truth — but Yūsuf عليه السلام, who's among the Muhsinīn, praised Allāh سبحانه وتعالى for his freedom and kindness to him and releasing him alone.

وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِىٓ إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِى مِنَ ٱلسِّجْنِ وَجَآءَ بِكُم مِّنَ ٱلْبَدْوِ

And He was certainly good to me when He took me out of prison and brought you [here] from bedouin life…

Allāh سبحانه وتعالى *alone* took me out of prison.

وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِىٓ

And He was certainly good to me…

He's among the Muhsinīn, so Allāh سبحانه وتعالى granted him reward for his Ihsān in this Dunyā by relieving him from his suffering — وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي. And you take from that that a person of this status, Allāh سبحانه وتعالى will return the goodness upon him in this Dunyā, as well as the Ākhirah. And if you're denied, a Muhsin accepts that as part of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's Plan. People wronged you, Allāh سبحانه وتعالى

allowed that to happen, He may have allowed it as a form of discipline, to forgive a sin, or possibly to raise your rank. And when others treat you well, a person who reaches this status acknowledges that it's Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's kindness that He softened their heart towards you. When I have food, it's not from my job or from my salary, it's not from a donor or from the grocery store or various other means, a Muhsin sees it from Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Everything is about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Ibrāhīm عليه السلام credited his sustenance and beverages to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, despite the various means to acquire them.

وَٱلَّذِى هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِى وَيَسْقِينِ

And it is He who feeds me and gives me drink.

He credited his recovery from illness to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, despite the presence of doctors and other medical remedies and resources. He said,

وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ

And when I am ill, it is He who cures me

Allāh سبحانه وتعالى taught us this in the Qur'ān in many verses.

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ

You didn't kill them, but Allāh سبحانه وتعالى killed them.

And he told Muhammad ﷺ it wasn't you who threw when you threw, it was Allāh سبحانه وتعالى who threw.

وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱللَّهَ رَمَىٰ

And you threw not, when you threw, but it was Allāh who threw.

Allāh سبحانه وتعالى said,

قَٰتِلُوهُمْ يُعَذِّبْهُمُ ٱللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ

Fight them; Allāh will punish them by your hands…

Fight them, Allāh will punish them. You're fighting, but Allāh سبحانه وتعالى said He will punish them. The verses like that are many, and that's not to deny the means, but a person of Ihsān sees the Lord of the means rather than the means. The vision in the heart of someone worshipping Allāh سبحانه وتعالى as if he sees Him, is stronger than his actual vision of seeing the means. Everything good, he sees is attributed to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, because Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is the One who can disable the means, he sees the One Who disables the means. He sees the One Who can create obstacles that prevent the means. He sees everything under the control of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, and the ultimate praise returns to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى.

Envision an individual who achieves this esteemed status in how he feels of sweetness in his 'Ibādah. Many, or most, may struggle to achieve Khushū' in Salāh when standing before Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, even by the Ka'bah. A person who

worships Allāh سبحانه وتعالى as if he sees Him will find that his Khushū' begins when he contemplates about starting to prepare for Salāh. At the Adhān, people are talking and mindless of the Adhān, he's in Khushū' listening and repeating after the Mu'adhin. In Wudū' he has Khushū', in Nawāfil and in Fard, he will feel Dhull and Khudū' and Khushū' like no other, because Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is always present in his heart as if he sees Him. Those who reach this status are the happiest, most peaceful, most pure in their spirit. No anxiety or worries, because they've made their lives about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Their concern becomes solely centered on 'Ubūdīyyah, no distractions. If there are any Dunyā distractions, it would be to attain means in order to strengthen their 'Ibādah journey to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, and they even transform those means or distractions into an 'Ibādah.

Ihsān is to worship Allāh سبحانه وتعالى as if you see Him, and that's an entire way of life. Look at the reward.

إِنَّ ٱلْمُتَّقِينَ فِى جَنَّٰتٍ وَعُيُونٍ

Indeed, the righteous will be among gardens and springs,

ءَاخِذِينَ مَآ ءَاتَىٰهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا۟ قَبْلَ ذَٰلِكَ مُحْسِنِينَ

Accepting what their Lord has given them. Indeed, they were before that Muhsinīn.

They're in جنات وعيون. Their reward is gardens with springs, and they're enjoying everything Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's giving them. Allāh gives them and they're enjoying it.

ءَاخِذِينَ مَآ ءَاتَىٰهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا۟ قَبْلَ ذَٰلِكَ مُحْسِنِينَ

Accepting what their Lord has given them. Indeed, they were before that Muhsinīn.

Because they were among the Muhsinīn. It's your ticket to Jannah. But, given that Ihsān is the pinnacle of worship, you can expect not just Jannah, but something higher and mightier in Jannah as well. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى said,

لِّلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا۟ ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ

For them who have done good is the best [reward] - and extra.

For the Muhsinīn, two things for them. The first one is Al-Husnā, which means Jannah. Husnā here means Jannah. Wa Ziyādah means "and more", and more means seeing Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Ihsān involves a believer worshiping Allāh سبحانه وتعالى as if he sees Him. So the reward is really actually seeing Allāh سبحانه وتعالى in Jannah.

هَلْ جَزَآءُ ٱلْإِحْسَٰنِ إِلَّا ٱلْإِحْسَٰنُ

Is the reward for good [anything] but good?

The ultimate reward and honor for the pinnacle of worship is the pinnacle bliss in Jannah, which is actually seeing Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. The reward is similar in nature to their 'Ibādah in this Dunyā. You worshipped Him as if you see Him, therefore in

Jannah, you *will* see Him. We ask Allāh سبحانه وتعالى to grant us the status of the Muhsinīn and the ultimate pleasure of looking at Allāh سبحانه وتعالى in Jannah.

وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه وسلم